

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7582

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CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

CDR USSAG NKP RTAFB

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

UNCLAS SAIGON 17165

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI VS

SUBJECT: SPECIAL PRESS BRIEFING BY GENERAL HIEP, GVN TPJMC

1. IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE REGULAR 0930 GVN PRESS BRIEFING SEPTEMBER 28, BRIG. GENERAL PHAN HOA HIEP, DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE RVN DELEGATION, TPJMC, HELD A SPECIAL BRIEFING "TO INFORM (THE PRESS) IMMEDIATELY OF THE SERIOUS INCIDENT" AT THE LE MINH CAMP AT PLEI DJERENG AND THE RVN DEL'S TREATMENT OF THIS INCIDENT AT THE SEPTEMBER 28 SESSION. THIS PRESS BRIEFING SCENARIO HAD BEEN CAREFULLY PLANNED. THE GVN HAD ANTICIPATED THE PRG REJECTION OF ITS PROTEST AND ITS PROPOSAL TO CONDUCT A JOINT INVESTIGATION AT PLEI DJERENG. WHEN THE PRG DELEGATION DID REJECT THE PROTEST ON GROUNDS (AS WE UNDERSTAND IT) THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO ARVN RANGER CAMP TO ATTACK, THE GVN DELEGATION TERMINATED THE MEETING BY ASKING THE PRG TO RECONSIDER ITS UNCLASSIFIED

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REPLY BEFORE THE NEXT SCHEDULED CHIEFS OF DELEGATION MEETING ON OCTOBER 2. BG HIEP WENT DIRECTLY FROM THE TPJMC MEETING TO THE PRESS BRIEFING. WE HAD ANTICIPATED THAT HE WOULD EMPHASIZE THAT HIS DELEGATION HAD NOT WALKED OUT OF THE MEETING OR RUPTURED

THE NEGOTIATIONS COMPLETELY. ALTHOUGH HE FAILED TO DO THIS INITIALLY, HIS BRIEF, UNAMBIGUOUS REPLY TO THE QUESTION ABOUT A GVN BOYCOTT (SEE BELOW) SHOULD HAVE LEFT NO DOUBT ON THAT SCORE. MUCH OF WHAT GENERAL HIEP HAD TO SAY WAS NOT NEW, BUT SEVERAL OF HIS OPENING REMARKS ARE OF INTEREST.

A. PRISONER RELEASE AND US MIA/DIC - HIEP BRIEFLY HIGHLIGHTED THE EVENTS SURROUNDING THE SUSPENSION OF THE PRISONER RELEASES IN JULY AND THE PERSISTENT PRG REFUSAL TO PROVIDE THE GVN WITH GUARANTEES ON THE SAFETY OF RELEASE SITES SO THAT THE RELEASES COULD RESUME. HE CHARGED THE COMMUNITIES WITH REFUSING TO RECEIVE PRISONERS AND THEN ACCUSING THE US AND THE GVN OF REFUSING TO RELEASE THEM. THIS, HE SAID, WAS ALL PART OF A PLOT TO FORCE THE GVN TO RELEASE ALL ITS PRISONERS WITHOUT RECIPROCITY BY THE OTHER SIDE. BY LINKING THE RELEASE OF PRISONERS, WHICH IS A TPJMC MATTER, TO THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION ON MIAS AND DICS, WHICH IS AN FPJMT MATTER, THE NLF AND HANOI HOPE TO PRESSURE THE US TO FORCE THE GVN TO RELEASE ALL ITS PRISONERS AND DETAINEES WITHOUT THEMSELVES HAVING TO RELEASE ANY OF THE THOUSANDS OF RVN PRISONERS WHICH THEY HOLD.

B. INVITATIONS TO THE RED CROSS - HIEP REVIEWED THE INVITATIONS TO THE CANADIAN AND POLISH RED CROSS SOCIETIES AND THE CANADIAN RC REQUEST FOR DETAILS ON THE CONDITIONS OF THE PROPOSED VISITS TO PLACES OF DETENTION. HIEP CLAIMED THAT THE GVN HAD TRIED IN THE TPJMC TO GET THE PRG TO DISCUSS THE SUBJECT SO THAT THE TWO PARTIES COULD ANSWER THE CANADIAN LETTER. THE PRG, HOWEVER, NOT ONLY REFUSES TO DISCUSS THE SUBJECT ON GROUNDS THAT THEY MUST WAIT FOR THE POLISH RC TO REPLY, BUT ALSO REJECTS THE GVN PROPOSAL TO SEND BOTH RC SOCIETIES LETTERS OF REMINDER.

C. ICCS - GENERAL HIEP REITERATED THE GVN REJECTION OF THE PRG CONTENTION THAT THE ICCS HAS LARGELY COMPLETED ITS MISSION AND SHOULD BE REDUCED. THE INCIDENT AT PLEI DJERENG CLEARLY DEMONSTRATES THE NEED FOR THE ICCS, AS IT UNMASKS THE PRG AIM OF REMOVING THE ICCS PRESENCE SO THAT IT CAN MORE EASILY LAUNCH ITS ATTACKS.

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2. GENERAL HIEP CONCLUDED WITH A SIX-POINT STATEMENT CONDEMNING NLF/DRV ACTS OF AGGRESSION AND SYSTEMATIC VIOLATION OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT AND DEMANDING THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE 300,000 NVA TROOPS, SCRUPULOUS OBSERVANCE OF THE PARIS AGREEMENTS, AND FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE CEASE-FIRE. HE ALSO REPEATED THE WARNING THAT THE GVN RESERVED THE RIGHT TO TAKE APPROPRIATE DEFENSIVE ACTION AGAINST NLF/DRV AGGRESSION.

3. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOLLOWED, SEVERAL OF WHICH ARE OF INTEREST.

A. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ON PLANS TO RETAKE THE LE MINH RANGER CAMP AT PLEI DJERENG, HIEP ANNOUNCED THAT THE PRESS

WOULD BE INFORMED TOMORROW OF PLANS TO TAKE THEM ON SUNDAY TO PLEIKU, WHERE THEY WOULD BE BRIEFED BY MR 2 CG, GENERAL TOAN. HIEP ALSO STATED THAT HE HAD PROPOSED TO GENERAL TOAN THAT THE PRESS BE FLOWN OVER PLEI DJERENG TO VERIFY THE ATTACK AND TAKE PICTURES, BUT CAUTIONED THAT GENERAL TOAN'S AGREEMENT WOULD DEPEND ON SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS SUCH AS ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE IN THE AREA.

B. THE SECOND QUESTIONER ASKED IF THE GVN PLANNED TO BOYCOTT THE TPJMC. HIEP REPLIED: "THAT WILL NOT HAPPEN BECAUSE WE ARE TRYING TO CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE OF RECONCILIATION."

C. THE THIRD QUESTIONER NOTED THAT THE GVN HAD ISSUED ITS SECOND SERIOUS WARNING IN AS MANY WEEKS AND THAT BOTH HAD BEEN REJECTED, AND ASKED IF GENERAL HIEP EXPECTED FULL-SCALE WARFARE TO RESUME. HIEP RESPONDED THAT THE COMMUNISTS, WITH 300,000 NVA TROOPS, HAD BEEN PERPETRATING SERIOUS VIOLATIONS FOR EIGHT MONTHS NOW, AND THE INTENSITY OF THESE ATTACKS HAD RECENTLY INCREASED. "IF MAJOR ATTACKS LIKE THAT AT THE LE MINH CAMP CONTINUE, WE WILL KNOW THAT IT IS THE BEGINNING OF FULL-SCALE WARFARE. THIS DEPENDS, OF COURSE ON HANOI, THE NLF, AND THE COMMUNIST BLOC, FOR OUR SIDE IS DETERMINED TO ACHIEVE PEACE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE AGREEMENT."

D. HIEP WAS ASKED TWICE ABOUT THE RETURN OF US WARPLANES, IN THAT THE GVN HAD RECENTLY ANNOUNCED THAT THEIR RETURN TO REPEL AGGRESSION WOULD NOT BE IN VIOLATION OF THE PARIS AGREEMENTS. UNCLASSIFIED

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HIEP REPLIED THAT HE KNEW OF NO REQUEST FOR A RETURN OF US PLANES. HE REITERATED THAT, IF THE OTHER SIDE CONTINUED ATTACKS SUCH AS THAT AGAINST PLEI DJERENG, THEY WOULD MEET WITH STRONG ARVN RESISTANCE AND THE US, AS A SIGNATORY TO THE PARIS AGREEMENTS, HAD A RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP ENSURE THE PEACE.

4. GENERAL HIEP SPOKE QUITE DISPASSIONATELY DURING THE BRIEFING AND, AT LEAST IN TRANSLATION, HIS REMARKS WERE LARGELY FREE OF THE COLORFUL LANGUAGE SO FREQUENTLY USED BY GVN SPOKESMEN IN DESCRIBING NLF/DRV ACTIVITIES. HIEP'S RELATIVELY MODERATE LANGUAGE IN DESCRIBING EVENTS AT PLEI DJERENG AND IN RESPONDING TO THE QUESTIONS CONCERNING RESUMPTION OF FULL-SCALE WARFARE AND THE RETURN OF US WARPLANES CONTRASTS WITH THE HIGHLY INDIGNANT AND PUGNACIOUS TONE (WHICH WE UNDERSTAND MIRRORS PRESIDENT THIEU'S OWN REACTION) OF GVN COMMENTARY FOR DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION. (SEE FBIS SAIGON ITEMS S270500 (TWO TAKES) AND S27130 FOR FULL TEXTS WHICH INCLUDE SUCH REMARKS AS: "NOW ONE DOES NOT HAVE ANY DOUBTS ABOUT RESUMPTION OF THE WAR; WE MUST RECAPTURE EVERYTHING, WHETHER IT BE A LEAF OF GRASS OR A STONE.") APPLING

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